HARAMBEE FLAME

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ON BLACK SELF-DEFENSE

"Rising Black-on-Black crime and the increase in police-community tensions, along with the rising militancy of the right wing and their paramilitary units, makes it mandatory that the Black community move toward instituting classes on self-defense, proper use of handguns and military tactics."

The above excerpt is taken from an editorial which appeared in a recent issue of the MILWAUKEE COURIER. The editorial, entitled "Time Now For Black Self-Defense Teams," urges Black communities to initiate their own measures for self-protection and to stop relying on police departments.

The COURIER editorial is one of many examples of the increasing frequency of the suggestion that communities take responsibility for their own protection against hostilities from both the inside and out. The fact that more and more individuals and organizations are taking such a position moves us to ask the question, "Why can't we depend on the police?"

Aside from the typical answer to this question, that police departments are under-manned and that there is inadequate cooperation given the police by community persons, there are two interrelated answers. One has to do with the actual function of police in this society and the other has to do with racist and other attitudes held by individual members of police departments which result in blatant double-standards with respect to the administration of police "justice."

Almost invariably, questionable police conduct against American-born Afrikans, particularly in cases of physical assault or homicide, our "spokespersons" and/or "leaders" cry out for better training of police, psychological screening, reexamination of guidelines relating to police use of physical force, etc. And of course there are always the calls for establishment or improvement of police-community relations on the part of the departments.

While these commonly called-for measures are well-intentioned and could, if implemented, serve to decrease the number of more blatant examples of police misconduct; they are tantamount to a person who is being stabbed by an attacker with a dull knife asking the attacker to please sharpen the knife before continuing the attack. In other words, the suggested reforms would not solve the problem. What they would accomplish is comparable to the stabbing victim's more "clean" killing resulting from the attacker's acquiescence to the victim's request. A sharp knife makes for less pain, but the end result remains: injury or death.

What so many of our "leaders" either fail to perceive or are afraid to tell us is that it is not certain "bad officers" that are at root of our problems with police but the very function of police departments. Have you ever wondered why you never see landlords being arrested and taken down to the station for failing to live up to their responsibilities in maintaining the plumbing in their apartments? Have you ever asked yourself why you don't see grocers being carted off to jail for overcharging customers for goods? You probably haven't. Yet you assume as

INSIDE THIS ISSUE, AN INTERVIEW WITH BROTHER MANNING MARABLE, PHD., OF THE AFRICANA STUDIES AND RESEARCH CENTER AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY IN ITHACA, NEW YORK.

AN INTERVIEW WITH MANNING MARABLE

Editor: Would you comment both on the National Black Independent Political Party and the Africana Studies and Research Center at Cornell University and your roles in these two entities?

Manning: The NBIPP, of which I am one of many founders, is a concept that began over 150 years ago with what historians have termed the Black Convention Movement. For decades, Black people have struggled to address our many social and political problems by coming together periodically, building institutions that address our own needs. NBIPP is the logical culmination of that effort: to build a movement to mobilize the Black masses at the grassroots, to establish cooperatives, public policy lobbying efforts, and to engage in electoral politics independent of both major parties. The Africana Center of Cornell is one of several leading Black Studies centers that is charting the theoretical and scholarly course that our movement should take.

Editor: What is the history of NBIPP?

Manning: NBIPP was formed on August 23rd., 1980, at a convention of the National Black Political Assembly. We held our first national Party Congress last summer in Chicago, and will be holding the second Party Congress in early August in Durham, North Carolina. The effort to build an independent, progressive Black Party has mobilized 3,000 Black people to date. We expect at least 6,000 to join by the end of 1982.

Editor: Brother Marable, what would you say in regards those American-born Afrikans who would suggest that we stick with the Democratic Party because we do have the numbers, on our own, to effect the desired changes?

Manning: I would say that they do not understand our history. We are exploited as a race, and are economically oppressed as a class. Therefore, any liberation for Black people in the U.S. must take on the question of race/class exploitation through the creation of a political organization that is responsible first to us, not someone else.

Editor: Does NBIPP plan to run candidates for office?

Manning: By 1983 we will begin to run our candidates in local and state-wide elections. We also will operate two offices--a national center in Washington, D.C. and an international office at the United Nations in New York City.

Editor: How would you describe the status of our struggle at this historical level?

Manning: The basic components of our current struggle can be summarized in three words: Reaganism, Racism, Reaction. I am not only hopeful, but absolute and unconditionally convinced, that we will triumph.

(Brother Marable is an Associate Professor of Political Economy at the Africana Studies And Research Center at Cornell University, writes a political column which appears in over 135 newspapers in the U.S. and United Kingdom, and is a founder of the NBIPP. The interview was conducted through the mail. We thank Manning for taking the time to answer our questions.)

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FROM OTHER SOURCES

Where the Jobs Are--"...The BLACK COLLEGIAN's survey of key firms in twenty different industrial categories turned up some very interesting findings on the industry-wide need for employees with certain kinds of professional skills. Querying nearly 350 major employers with active college recruitment programs, we found that MBAs and engineers were being sought by 42% of these companies; accountants were being recruited by 40% of the firms; finance, marketing/sales grads and computer scientists were nee ded by more than

35%; chemistry, mathematics, business and management grads were sought by more than 20%....

"On the other end of the spectrum, political science, sociology, mass communications, education and architecture grads were being sought by no more than 7% of the firms surveyed....

"More than forty-eight % of the companies responding to our inquiries indicated that they would be hiring more Black grads this year than they did in 1981, while 46% indicated that their hiring goals for Blacks would remain about the same. For college graduates in general, only 14% of the respondents to our survey indicated that they planned to do more hiring than in the previous year, while 55% of the firms said their new college hires would remain about the same....

"The Endicott Report(from Northwestern University) indicated that salary offers for engineering bachelors will average $25,428; $22,260 for computor scientists; $21,516 for mathematics/statistics majors; $21,492 for bachelor chemists; $18,648 for accounting majors; $18,372 for sales/marketing grads; $17,532 for economics/finance majors; and $17,448 for business administration bachelors.."

-excerpted from Feb./March issue of BLACK COLLEGIAN

Terrorism in Namibia--(from a report released last month by the British Council of Churches, entitled--"Namibia/a Nation Wronged")"...In one 'particularly objectionable practice,' the report noted, South African forces drag through Ovambo villages behind their vehicles the bodies of alleged insurgents who have been killed. The bodies are exhibited to their parents, to villagers and even to young children....

"In one case cited by the report, two young children were shot and killed in their hut during the night by security forces. A local court later awarded their mother $1,100 in compensation for her loss."

-excerpted from GUARDIAN(3-10'82)

SELF-DEFENSE

proper the eviction, at the hands of police, of a tenant who is behind in his or her rent. You accept the rightness of the police arrest of one accused of shoplifting.

The mistake that too many of us have made is that we have looked at individual police acts as if they had taken place in isolation. We have failed to look at these acts as they have fit into a systematic and historical framework. We have to bear in mind that it is the function of the police to enforce this nation's laws. If we examine these laws, we find that they are designed to further the interests of monied people and to protect the political/economic/social status quo. It is no accident that, while Wayne Williams, for example, has been dubbed a "murderer" by the legal system; the heads of utility companies which have shut off heat to poor people and caused the death of a number of elderly people this past winter have not and will not be charged with any crime.

Innumerable examples could be cited here to further show that the function of this society's laws favor and serve the interests of those who wield power, but you have the capacity to examine the question for yourself. The point is a simple one: If it is the function of this country's laws to protect the interests(and property) of the powerful and/or the wealthy and it is the function of the police to enforce these laws, then it is clearly the function of the police to protect the interests(and property) of the wealthy and/or powerful. And none of the commonly suggested reforms are going to change this function.

When we add to this matter of the police function the fact of white racism in this country and its resulting establishment and maintenance of disproportionate economic and political poverty in non-white neighborhoods, it should come as no shock to us that the people in our communities are not treated the same as people in white or

affluent communities. We should have learned by now to expect the kinds of treatment by the police that we have historically received. We should have learned to expect that the police are not going to be particularly concerned about how safe our streets and homes are and that the police are not going to be losing much sleep over how discourteous or brutal they might be with our people.

But we cannot be content to retreat into shells of a sense of powerlessness and do nothing, not only we are threatened by "over-zealous" police, but because of the increasing threat to us by certain of those who live among us, those who, for whatever reasons, seek to survive at the expense of our suffering. We cannot afford to continue to allow our women to be pimped, our homes to be broken into, our youth to be addicted to drugs, our loved ones to be assaulted, etc. Whether the threats to us come from within or without, we cannot continue to do nothing.

We must begin to establish environments and values in ourselves, our families, and our communities so that Black-on-Black respect replaces Black-on-Black crime. But while we are in the process of initiating the kinds of constructive programs by which this is to be done, we are going to have to become the keepers of our own community peace. We have "gotten over" on each other too much. We have spilled too much of each others' blood.

-editor

You are receiving the February and March issues of the FLAME together due to the fact that we are very short on money and are having difficulty meeting the costs of reproducing our newsletter. Our banquet is coming up in June and the little money we do have will need to be used to put together a decent banquet program.

THE JOINT

It's a world of cement
steel and stone
A world aloof forlorn and alone
It's a world with row and row
of steel barred cells
A world controlled by ringing bells
It's a world devoid of trust
and filled with sin
A world of angry men locked within
It's a world of smashing fists
and deadly knives
A world with cold contempt
for human lives
It's a world--though buried deep
of tender hearts....

and men who weep.

-Jasper E. Faulkner

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You are welcome to attend our meetings on Monday evenings at 5:15. For information, contact either Chairman Chico Wilson or Education Chairman David L. Rice at the above address or call our sponsor, Scott Marshall, at 471-3161, ext. 380

In the February issue we listed the price of Donna Polk's book, BLACK MEN AND WOMEN OF NEBRASKA as being $6.50. It is $6.95.